Region 5

The Heart Galleries of Texas received funding in the 88th Legislative Session to improve permanency outcomes for youth who have experienced foster care. Over the past year, efforts have focused on expanding the Heart Galleries model across the state, increasing community collaboration, developing online trainings and resources, identifying the post-permanency needs of families, and conducting a Request for Applications (RFA) process to select qualified providers in each region to help meet the post-permanency needs of families.

About the Heart Gallery of Southeast Texas

Heart Gallery: Texas Family Care Network
Website: https://www.heartgalleryofsetx.org/
Launch Event: May 15, 2024

The Texas Family Care Network staff has been affiliated with and invested in previous Heart Gallery efforts, and their experience and community connections has allowed them to gain traction quickly. By the end of their first year in August 2024, they had created a website, hosted a successful launch event in May, and organized 34 outreach events, reaching over 1400 attendees. They also held 27 collaborative stakeholder meetings with 286 attendees, and 8 information sessions attended by 51 people. They currently have all eligible children in the region featured on Heart Gallery and are in the process of updating photos. Heart Gallery of Southeast Texas has held 24 exhibits, with numbers steadily increasing, and are focusing on community-building and engagement. Their web traffic has seen a consistent upward trend, growing from 200 visits in May to 2,912 visits in August 2024.

Needs Assessment of Post-Permanency Services in Region 5

In March of 2024, researchers from the Texas Institute for Child & Family Wellbeing and staff at the Texas Center for Child and Family Studies conducted a statewide post-permanency needs assessment, surveying caregivers and providers about services, needs and barriers for families after adoption or permanency legal conservatorship. In Region 5, **17 caregivers** and **7 providers** participated in the survey. A summary of findings is reported below.

Familiarity with Post-Permanency Services

- 34% of caregivers (*n* = 20) and 29% (*n* = 2) of providers were very or extremely familiar with post-permanency services.
- 22 caregivers reached out to their region's Post-Permanency Services Provider (39%).
- 13 caregivers reported being very or extremely satisfied with the assistance they received (59%).

Service Satisfaction by Service Sector

% of caregivers who were somewhat or very satisfied with:

- Developmental services (80%, *n* = 8)
- Medical services (79%, *n* = 11)
- School-based services (67%, *n* = 8)
- Mental health services (55%, *n* = 6)
- Respite (38%, *n* = 5)
- Post-permanency services (36%, *n* = 5)
- Childcare (23%, *n* = 3)

Note: Percentages are based on the number of people who answer each question. Please exercise caution when interpreting findings with small sample sizes. Small sample sizes can limit the generalizability of the results, as they may not accurately represent the broader population.

Most Needed Services and Supports

- **Mental health services**, particularly therapists and other providers who are adoption- and trauma-informed and accept Medicaid.
- **Childcare and babysitting**.
- **Financial assistance** to cover childcare, extracurricular activities, tutoring, legal aid, and post-adoption support groups.
- **More comprehensive information** on the adoption process.
- 50% of caregivers expressed an interest in having **family resource centers**.
- 43% of caregivers expressed interest in **Parents Night Out**.

Caregiver Barriers to Accessing Services

- Lack of needed services, particularly for mental health services.
- Limited access to services due to distance and unavailability.
- Inability to cover out-of-pocket costs that are not covered by Medicaid or other insurance.
- Not knowing what services are available.

Provider Barriers to Supporting Families

- Lack of services and supports to offer to families, particularly those who need residential or inpatient care.
- Lack of clarity around the chain of command when needs arise for families after adoption or permanency.

Top services that caregivers needed but had difficulty accessing or were unable to get:

- Adoption subsidy or Permanency Care Assistance (PCA)
- Therapeutic or specialized camp
- Respite or babysitting (not overnight)
- Childcare or afterschool care (not specialized)
- Parent support groups

To learn more about this needs assessment, go to: Needs Assessment of Post-permanency Services in Texas Dashboard. You can locate all the data specific to your region.

Looking Ahead

Region 5 is working on building their post-permanency collaborative. Based on the needs assessment and RFA selection process, the following organization was selected to provide services in Region 5:

Buckner Children and Family Services: Identify specialized providers to serve families, provide families with psycho-education and skill-building support (through TBRI groups), conduct monthly support groups for caregivers and teens, and cover the costs of supplemental materials and supplies (including books, sensory items consistent with TBRI, printing, technology, and other projected related resources).

The Heart Gallery is housed at this region's Single Source Continuum Contractor. As they continue to move into Phase II of community-based care, there are opportunities to develop a more seamless process for referrals and transportation to photoshoots, which will decrease the length of time children wait to be featured in the Heart Gallery.

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